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U. S. Department of Agriculture

EXTENSION'S CONTRIBUTION TO MEETING THE PRESENT CRISIS

A radio talk by Dr. C. B. Smith, Assistant Director of Extension Work, U. S. Department of Agriculture, to be delivered in the land-grant college period of the National Farm and Home Hour, Wednesday, June 22, 1932, over a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.

Extension work in agriculture and home economics is a government enterprise. The Federal Department of Agriculture, the State colleges of agriculture, and more than 2,500 of the 2,850 rural counties of the United States, all cooperate financially and otherwise in carrying on the work.

Agricultural extension is based on the fact that every State in the Union, and the Territories of Hawaii, Alaska, and Porto Rico, have agricultural experiment stations, carrying on researches, including farm management and marketing, rural sociology and home economics. The United States Department of Agriculture, likewise, is studying yearly more than a thousand farm and home problems. These State experiment stations and the United States Department of Agriculture are constantly finding facts of significance in agriculture and home economics, facts that enable the farmer to grow his crops more economically, plant more in accordance with the needs of the nation, market more intelligently; facts that make the work of farmer's wife easier, make her family healthier and stronger, help her buy and make the family clothing more economically, spend the family income more wisely, make a more satisfying home for the family.

Now, it is not enough to find facts in agriculture and home making through research. Extension work has come so that the farmer and his family may be shown how to apply on their own farm and in their own home this new knowledge, by someone who knows. It is not enough to publish the results of agricultural research in the papers and bulletins. The value of research work comes in its application. That is why we have extension agents. Extension doesn't simply tell how to do the new thing or the new way, but shows how on individual farms and in individual homes.

In this time of emergency, extension is keeping the farmer and his family informed on everything the farmer ought to know about cheaper production, the better organization of his farm. Extension is helping every farmer to grow his own living, set a good table, grow his own vegetables, meat, eggs, milk, honey, live well. A good table is one of the great satisfactions of life. It helps make home. It can be had for the planning and growing. It adds immeasurably to the satisfactions of life.

Thousands of town families without experience are moving to the country these days. County and State extension agents are there to help these men and women make a living.

To the experienced farmer, these extension agents bring economic information relative to markets and marketing, Federal farm loans, the agricultural outlook, better ways and cheaper ways of doing things. They help the farmer analyze his tax receipts and understand them, so that he can act intelligently in curtailing taxes.

In this time of stress, too, extension agents, along with other agencies, are extending their work beyond the country to the man in town without a job, helping him put in a garden and become partly self-sustaining, and, besides, giving him a job at wholesome work.

Another thing extension agents are doing that may not appeal, on first thought, as significant in this time of emergency, but which rural people themselves regard as most worth-while and helpful, is the incidental social and recreational work extension agents are carrying on as a supplement to their regular work. In this work, rural men, women, and children 10 to 60 years old, meet together in community singing, social life, recreation and play, pageantry, and debate and have a wonderful time, forgetting their troubles and learning how to work together, cooperate, and be neighbors and friends in truth.

If ever farmers needed knowledge -- information to guide them -- it is now. In Iowa, 651 farmers, with the assistance of extension workers, kept records of their business. Only 7 of these 651 farmers showed a positive return for management. Extension agents helped these farmers analyze the records. They found that in these times of low prices the more efficient farmer depended mostly on their own labor, rather than on hired labor, kept a substantial portion of their farms in grass rather than cultivated crops, and fed the larger part of their crops to livestock.

Extension agents are helping the farmer analyze his farm business and make adjustments in the light of both local and national conditions. This is a service more appreciated by the farmer now than in times of prosperity.

Yes, extension work is meeting the emergency. County agents are seeing that the barns, the granaries, the pantries are full. They are counseling with the farmer on the planning of the farm and analysis of the farm business. They are studying his taxes with him so that he may know what his tax moneys are being used for and can make needed adjustments. They are helping the needy farmer get government seed loans to tide him through. They are guiding the newcomer on the land so that he may grow his own food and sustain himself and family. They are showing the experienced farmer how to cut costs and produce still more economically. They are helping maintain morale in agriculture through bringing rural people together in play, song, pageantry, debate and social enjoyment. The farmers are carrying on.